



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Citrus longhorned beetles found in Tukwila

OLYMPIA – Entomologists from the state Department of Agriculture are searching for evidence of the highly destructive citrus longhorned beetle, and they're asking for your help. This is a shiny black beetle, capable of flight, measuring 1 to 1 ½ inches long, with irregular white patches on its back, and long distinguishable antennae that are banded with black and white. (Photos are on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pestaler/achinfin.gif>)



If you see one of these beetles, scoop it into a jar or other container and then call (800) 443-6684.

The search for this beetle began immediately after the owner of a nursery in Tukwila brought what appeared to be an Asian longhorned beetle to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Seattle plant inspection office (USDA). Asian longhorned beetles have caused thousands of trees to be destroyed in Chicago and New York.

The entomologists caught two more beetles in a group of maple trees at the nursery on Thursday. They also found eight exit holes on the trees, indicating that up to five beetles are on the loose. Because many beetles resemble the Asian longhorned beetle, the beetles caught in Tukwila were sent to the Smithsonian for positive identification. They were positively identified as citrus longhorned beetles on Friday.

It is the first time the citrus longhorned beetle has been found in Washington.

The citrus longhorned beetle is closely related to the Asian longhorned beetle. It is just as destructive. Forests and landscapes could be severely damaged if the beetle is allowed to establish itself in this country.

The maple trees were imported from Korea. The entire shipment of 369 trees has been destroyed. The trees were in the eighth month of a two-year long disease quarantine to ensure they were healthy before they could be sold to retail outlets or the public.

State and federal entomologists will be inspecting trees in the immediate area for egg sites, or damage to leaves and bark that would indicate adult beetles have been feeding. The state and federal departments of agriculture are also discussing methods that can be used to prevent the beetles from becoming established in this state.

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“Fortunately, we’re ready,” said Brad White, managing entomologist at the state Department of Agriculture. “We’ve been gearing up for this fight for more than two years. One entomologist got firsthand knowledge of Asian longhorned beetle control measures in Chicago.”

Citrus longhorned beetles are considered serious orchard pests in Asia. They represent an even larger threat to trees in this country where they have no natural enemies.

Females may lay as many as 200 eggs individually, not in egg masses, beneath the bark on the lower portion of the trunk or exposed roots of trees. The eggs hatch into larvae, large worm-like grubs that feed on wood within the tree. Larvae grow more than 2 inches long and ½ inch wide and then emerge as adult beetles.

Despite its name, citrus longhorned beetles attack a wide range of living hardwood trees and a few conifers. They are fond of maple, alder and poplar trees. They kill trees, gradually, by boring large holes throughout the heartwood of the tree during the insect’s larval stage.

Since the New York and Chicago Asian longhorned beetle infestations were linked to wooden pallets and other wood packing materials, USDA requires those materials to be treated before entering the U.S. Several species of longhorned beetles have been found in nursery stock from Asia.

Asian longhorned beetle is one of the potentially harmful insects monitored by the state Department of Agriculture, which has primary responsibility for protecting people, agriculture and the environment from exotic and invasive pests.

To date, only two adult Asian longhorned beetles have been found in Washington. One was found in 1997 on pallets at a business near Marysville. The other was discovered in 1998 at a utility in Bellingham. In each case, only one live beetle was found. Follow-up surveys found no additional beetles, so there is little chance that they could have established populations here.

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